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Men-Scott Report

Oswald Probe Report Delayed

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Mr. Allen

WASHINGTON — The special commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy has been forced to set a new target date for completion of its already overdue report—September 1.

Even that is tentative. The seven - member probing group had planned to publish its world-awaited findings by June 1. But a number of important witnesses are still to be heard, and crucial information still is being sought with no certainty when it can be obtained — if ever.

For example: Biggest gap in the commission's historic study is a comprehensive account of Lee Harvey Oswald's connections and activities during the three years he was in Russia as a "dedicated Marxist" and avowed defector.

The commission is still very much in the dark on this vital phase of the killer's life. Records and other material supplied by the Soviet have shed little light. The last batch, submitted some weeks ago, was of no material consequence. It chiefly supplemented and corroborated previous official documents.

Similarly, the State Department so far has provided scant significant information.

Secretary Rusk, Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, who was in Moscow throughout the period Oswald lived in Russia, and members of the embassy's staff who had dealings with him have yet to testify. Several times, Rusk has been slated to appear, but crises and sudden trips to Europe and Southeast Asia necessitated postponements.

The commission still does not definitely know when these key State Department authorities will tell their stories.

Strange Question

Also up in the air is when Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy will testify.

As exclusively disclosed in this column, the former First Lady has agreed to do that. But she has not signified when and in what manner — in person or in written account.

A close friend of hers has told commission members Mrs. Kennedy is "going through a difficult period. She has good days and bad days. Perhaps what she is experiencing can best be described as undergoing the full reaction of that she has gone through. It's just catching up with her. She needs time to prepare herself for this ordeal, which it certainly will be."

The investigators expect Mrs. Kennedy to testify in person. But she may decide otherwise. They know she is consulting Attorney General Robert Kennedy, as she does on virtually all matters. She conferred with him before accepting the commission's invitation to appear.

Even more indefinite is a statement from President Johnson.

As reported by this column, the commission has indicated it will be glad to receive anything he cares to submit. So far there has been no word on what he will do.

Another factor delaying the investigators' report is the protracted Senate battle over the civil rights bill. This 10-week-old struggle has drastically curtailed the time and efforts of two of the probers — Senators Richard Russell, Ga., leader of the Southern bloc, and John Sherman Cooper (R - Ky.), in the forefront of the fight for the legislation.

In the next several weeks, Mrs. Ruth Paine, in whose home Mrs. Marina Oswald was living at the time of the assassination, will be recalled for further questioning.

The probers particularly want to ask her about some baffling remarks made in the course of a conversation. As reported to the commission, Mrs. Paine's enigmatic statement was as follows:

"Do you think the government has done something they are ashamed of and are trying to cover up?"

"No, do you?" was the reply.

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Paine, "of course not."

"Then why did you ask?"

"I just wondered," said Mrs. Paine.

J. Lee Rankin, general counsel of the commission, is being advised to ask Attorney General Kennedy, CIA Director John McCone and other top officials to file affidavits that they have submitted all the documents and information in the files of their agencies relating to Oswald and the assassination.

This is being urged as a "precautionary measure."

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